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SWAN HILLS COLLOQUIUM

ACTION PLAN

LEGISLATURE
JUN 10
EDMONTON

by

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FOREWORD

Alberta Municipal Affairs, with the Town of Swan Hills, was pleased to host the Colloquium. Our 28 hours served to bridge the past with the present. As a group, you collectively shared your visions of Swan Hills' future and identified actions. As a result, the Colloquium experience along with this report should serve you in the days, months and years to come.

This report is really a benchmark or reference point along a path of development for your community. As such, Section 1 highlights how to use this Action Plan. For your information, Section 2 contains the vision statement composed from the Thursday morning activity. The details of the actions are recorded in Section 3. These could be reviewed as a checklist or a reminder of what is to come as well as what's been accomplished. Section 4 re-visits the Colloquium and its purpose.

Truly I would be amiss of not recognizing the efforts and patience of the consultants. On your behalf and mine, let me offer a warm thank you to Lyle Benson and Floyd Dykeman on a job well done. Also, each of the participants deserve a thanks for affording the time and "voting with your feet" as it were by getting involved in Swan Hills' future.

Let me close, by re-stating the message you give when listening and paraphrasing: You care about someone, you care about yourself and your relationship.

Tom Forgrave, Assistant Deputy Minister
Alberta Municipal Affairs, Edmonton
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1. HOW TO USE THE COLLOQUIUM ACTION PLAN

The actions recommended by the Colloquium participants should be used as a guide for proceeding with needed initiatives. Participants with a vested interest in various facets of Swan Hills' present and future should:

- examine the Action Plan;
- determine which actions it is prepared to be committed to; and
- clearly state that commitment for the benefit of other participants.

Leadership for specific actions rests with the participants, and this needs to be clarified. Meanwhile, the Town of Swan Hills must be responsible for follow-up and keeping participants informed in the community development process.

The action identified by this Plan should be the basis for developing specific project commitments. A project work program should be prepared by groups working on a particular issue. Such a project work program would state (1) the project goal, (2) the specific results to be achieved (3) the specific actions to be taken (4) a timeframe for specific actions and (5) include a signature by all involved groups that they are committed to the work program. Documentation of this nature assists to focus group effort on the issue, achieves needed commitment, and provides an effective tool for keeping people informed.

On an annual basis an evaluation of progress with this Action Plan should be undertaken by the Town and shared. This could form part of the agenda for a second annual Colloquium.

2. SWAN HILLS 1998: A VISION STATEMENT

Swan Hills will have a gradual population growth. The community will experience a reduction in oil industry activity. However, the oil industry will still be an important and major contributor to the local economy. The number of jobs in the oil industry will be reduced from the current levels for two reasons: First, because of the reduced activity and second, due to the introduction of new technology replacing men with machinery.

The economy will be further diversified by: the development of spin-off from the special waste management plant; the attraction of new industries; as well as the establishment of cottage industries. This will be accomplished by the community, improvement districts, industry and the senior levels of government working co-operatively together through networking. Economic opportunities will be further enhanced by the development of the natural environment for recreation opportunities.

Services to the local population will have improved and people will be more committed to the community as a family oriented, friendly and healthy Town. In fact, the main strength of the Town, as viewed by the local population as well as outsiders, is the commitment to a better community. This is evidenced by the pride in the Town and the efforts of the community to work with others to solve problems.

Much of the housing in Swan Hills will be owned by local residents, which reflects a longer term commitment to the community. As a result, a "normal" housing and real estate market will exist in Swan Hills.

Many of the services offered will be financed with the co-operation of the Town and the Improvement Districts utilizing agreements. The Town continues to effectively manage and deliver quality services within this financial reality.

From the information provided by each of the groups on Wednesday afternoon, the consultants synthesized it into the general concensus statements of each of the three key issues. It was recognized these statements are also part of the process of articulating a vision for Swan Hills.

VIABILITY/STABILITY OF SWAN HILLS

The cause of the viability/stability issue in the community is the nature of the economic base and the structure of the assessment base. Local residents suffer the symptoms associated with the high taxes, high dependence on cyclical industries, for example.

The solution to the problem will require a people orientation combined with an economic development and financial adjustment approach. The results of a combined approach will mean that a balanced solution to the issue will likely be achieved while encouraging people to establish stronger links to the community, develop greater social cohesion within the community and develop community pride.

This approach must, however, be tempered by realistic expectations of life in a small community and must be accomplished through a joint effort among all participants, including the Improvement Districts.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION IN SWAN HILLS

The cause of this issue is that the assessment base is insufficient to support the present levels of service. The result has meant high taxes. For future viability, the tax structure must change in the long term as well as the short term to deal with immediate problems.

A second and equally important concern that must be resolved is a dilemma on one side, the question is whether the high taxes are caused by the community attempting to provide an unrealistic high level of service as demanded by its residents. On the other side the question deals with whether the assessment base is inadequate to support the levels of service that should be provided in a community like Swan Hills. In part, the current municipal service levels are explained because people who move to Swan Hills ofter come from larger urban centres with high expectations about the services available within the community.

Lastly, if changes to the tax structure are required, a fair and equitable approach to the problem must be determined to ensure that a problem in one area is not being transferred to another area.

IMAGE OF SWAN HILLS

Swan Hills has an image contradiction. This town has both a positive image and a negative image by those within the community and external to the community. Also, part of the image issue is that former residents from 20 or 30 years ago are describing today's Swan Hills as it was then.

Today, Swan Hills is a much different community than the Swan Hills of the 1950's. The residents must be forward looking as a community, while honoring its past.

3. ACTION PLAN

Once the participants offered their comments on the community-wide vision (10 years) hence, they developed a vision statement for one of the eight issues. These statements serve as an introduction to the seven issue Action Plans. In several cases the consultants have offered their ideas. These are distinguished with an "*" in front of the statement.

As you may recall, the Action Plans for the sub-issues were developed by completing the following five steps:

1. Sub-issues Addressed
   What is the sub-issue and why something has to be done?

2. Strategic Actions
   What has to be done?

3. Priority
   When it has to be done? What is the true importance of this sub-issue? High, Medium, Low.

4. Resource Groups
   With whom, what groups must be involved with the action steps?

5. Action Steps
   How the specific actions can be done to resolve this sub-issue?

GOVERNMENT HUMAN SERVICES: VISION STATEMENT

Office space is available in the Town for the central delivery of all government human services. Agencies are working together to co-ordinate scheduling and service delivery. The community of Swan Hills is provided with dependable government services.

Issue: GOVERNMENT HUMAN SERVICES

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Availability of government human services	Develop and use central location for the delivery of all government human services.	Medium	All of the following groups need to be involved with actions: - FCSS - Social Services Dept. - Mental Health - Child Welfare - Legal Aid - Probation Officer - AADAC - School Councillor - Town - MLA - Media	Space is now available. Office needs to be established - e.g. telephone connected.
	Establish a commitment by all agencies to resolving servicing problem.	High		Meet with Administrators of Human Services to develop understanding of concerns, needs and solutions. Hold the meeting in Swan Hills and show available facilities.
	Develop among the agencies an acceptable and complementary schedule for services to Swan Hills.	High		Have all agencies meet to arrange a schedule of when services will be available, times, dates, etc.
	Develop a system to market availability of services.	Medium		Advertise availability of services including time etc. Town should be involved and make use of newspapers, cable channel, brochures, etc.

HOUSING: VISION STATEMENT

Housing is 70% owned by local residents and 30% rental. This is a complete reversal from the 1988 housing profile. Land is continuing to be made available to the private sector developers for new development. This ensures that the developer profits on both the land and the housing. The sale of company homes has occurred and continues but at a price that is comparable to private sector housing available on the market. Mortgage loan guarantees are provided by one of the senior levels of government.

Issue: HOUSING

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Land Development for Housing	Identify areas for growth.	Completed		
	Make developers aware of opportunities.	High	- Urban Development Institute - Alberta Housing - Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	Town initiate approaches to Province and development industry to make land available.
Encourage Private Ownership of Housing	Companies should sell houses at market prices with a gradual phase out of rent subsidy. New houses should be developed and sold by the private sector. Companies may consider employee assistance to purchase homes.	Medium	Oil Companies and other owners of corporate housing Banks CMHC Provincial Government	Review housing aid program to encourage private ownership and employee stability. Gradual reduction in rent subsidy will help to ensure that there is no inherent advantage to rent over ownership.
	* Encourage CMHC to approve house mortgages.	High	Town Banks CMHC Provincial Government MLA MP	- Request that CMHC explain in writing why mortgages in Swan Hills are not insured. - Request that CMHC explain, in writing, what circumstances are necessary for them to guarantee mortgages. - Lobby Provincial and Federal politicians. - Examine Provincial Government alternatives (e.g. establish an Alberta Treasury Branch).

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION: VISION STATEMENT

The community is still heavily dependent upon the oil industry as a major economic force. However, there is increased processing of other local resources related to forestry and mining for example. Tourism and recreation have developed over the past ten years with an emphasis on fishing and hunting. Commercial packaging of outdoor recreation trips is occurring. Some light industry has located within the town resulting primarily from the special waste management plant. This plant also is the catalyst for development of a 'centre of excellence' from waste management training and research.

Issue: ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Develop light industry	Explore possibility of developing beaver tail leathers and petroleum by-products (e.g. pet food).	High	Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife Alberta Trappers Association Metis Association of Alberta I.A.A. Department of Economic Development Department of Tourism and Small Business N.A.D.C.	- Develop a business plan for Swan Hills involving the public and private sectors. - Determine the financial and infrastructure needs for new industry. - Assess the feasibility of constructing a tanning processing facility and assess markets.

Develop tourism and recreation potential	Develop tourism based on hunting, fishing, outdoor and environmental education, photographic safaris, outfitting and guiding.	High	Department of Forestry, Land and Wildlife
			Department of Tourism, Small Business
			Northern Alberta Outfitters
			Department of Economic Development
			N.A.D.C.
				- Develop a tourism and outdoor recreation plan including such features as:
				  - special events such as fishing derbies
				  - international marketing
				  - environmental education
				  - photographic safaris
				  - winter recreation such as snow-mobile regattas, ice fishing
				  - family package deals combining wilderness experience with urban experience - e.g. West Edmonton Mall
				  - bear hunting

Issue: ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION (continued)

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
				- outfitting and guide training centre - infrastructure requirements.
	Examine the potential for - manufacturing of pharmaceuticals - toothpicks and other forestry related processing - charcoal briquettes			
Develop a centre of excellence for waste management including training and research	Establish a waste management institute with an international reputation to include: Research Training Education Impact Studies Future Trends Recycling	High (window of opportunity is short)	Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation (A.S.W.M.C.) Alberta Environment N.A.I.T. Environment Canada Universities Other Institutes Provincial Government Special Interest Groups	Have A.S.W.M.C. agree to sponsor concept. Investigate how funding could be secured from private and public sectors. Identify additional facilities needed (may be tied into a new high school complex if built). Determine who will operate, role of institute.

HIGH SCHOOL: VISION STATEMENT

The location of the high school is still unresolved. The community is divided over the purpose of the school. Some people in the community believe the school is essential for community and economic needs, while others believe it is needed for more convenient educational training and schooling. The community agrees that a second-rate high school system is unacceptable. The school population remains relatively stable over the ten year period and there is increasing interest in the concept of long distance education.

Issue: HIGH SCHOOL

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Location of a High School in Swan Hills	The community must determine why a high school is needed 1) economic and/or community reasons or 2) education curriculum Explore alternatives to a traditional high school - for example - vocational training through joint business/education programs. Explore whether student expectations are unduly high given their present experiences in Barrhead.	High	Swan Hills Council Industry Department of Education School Board	Hold Meeting - Council take initiative jointly with school board.

IMAGE: VISION STATEMENT

Substantial aesthetic and service improvements have been made in the Town of Swan Hills. Services provided by the public and private sectors have improved significantly. There is a greater awareness that quality and courteous service is a requirement. Residents, because they take pride in their community, serve as ambassadors for Swan Hills.

Issue: IMAGE

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Develop a positive image of Swan Hills for those within, as well as external to, the community (including former residents)	Improve Human Services. (Also see the Action Plan under Government Human Services).	High	Improvement District F.C.S.S. Town Provincial Government including the Department of Municipal Affairs Member of Legislative Assembly	Mayor must bring all parties together to help address the need for improvement.
	Provide courteous service.	High	Chamber of Commerce Town Retail Merchants	Hold meetings to determine best solutions to problems. Key individuals include Rose Parker - Chamber of Commerce, Doug Leavitt - TAC.
	Encourage residents to serve as community ambassadors.	High	Service Clubs Town Elected Officials	Mayor should convene meetings to get key groups involved to address action.
	Develop greater community confidence towards oil industry long term commitment to town and area.	High	Oil Companies MLA MP Improvement District Media Town	Convene meetings with key groups, develop information package, market and distribute information for all.
	Improve Aesthetics.	Medium	Town Yellowhead R.P.C. Landscape Architecture/ Planning Consultant	Develop landscape development/beautification scheme.
	Develop municipal rec. facilities.	Low		

Issue: IMAGE (continued)

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
	Ensure that local businesses do not have unrealistic profit expectations.	Medium		
	* Prepare a History book of Swan Hills	Medium	Town University	- Seek funding and expertise. - Distribute book as an indication of community pride and understanding of Town's roots.
	* Establish an Image Committee	High	Town Companies	- Determine the image Swan Hills wishes to project. MLA - Remember to honor the past.
	* Establish a Swan Hills festival, homecoming, reunion	Medium	Town Service Clubs MLA Companies	- Establish a working committee to organize events and seek funding. - Advertise and market events in oil industry magazines. - Have activities that reunite people who have previously worked in Swan Hills. - Plan special activities - displays, etc.

COUNCIL/ADMINISTRATION: VISION STATEMENT

The council is a strong team who emphasizes policy development. They also concentrate attention on working with and supporting community groups as well as emphasizing a cooperative work relationship with the Improvement Districts and the Provincial Government. Local citizens, because they are committed to the community, are involved in a more substantial way with the community decision process. Good administration continues to enhance council's ability to be effective and informed.

Issue: COUNCIL/ADMINISTRATION

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Ensure a strong council/administration team which is viewed as such by citizens, other municipalities and governments.	Policy setting/direction	High	Council	Council retreat to establish policy on role of council and its organization.
	Communication	High	Council and Administration Boards/Committees Other Municipalities and levels of governments.	Establish system(s) for on-going communication with: Citizens - forward newsletter with utility bills Boards/Committees - see below Other Municipalities - hold quarterly meetings with area municipalities Governments - maintain regular contact with the MLA and MP in person and in writing. Administrator develop and maintain contact with civil servants.
	Citizen Involvement	High	Council Resource Persons	At Council Retreat identify boards/committees on which council representation is needed.

Issue: COUNCIL/ADMINISTRATION (continued)

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
			community involvement.	Eliminate council representation on others by recruiting citizen volunteers - talk to companies about corporate policy on employee Establish communication system to keep council fully informed of board/committee activities.
	Paper Shuffle	Medium	Council and Administration	Review volume of material forwarded to council. Eliminate unnecessary material or provide summary with full document available for review by anyone who wishes it.

TAXATION/ASSESSMENT: VISION STATEMENT

Much of the industrial assessment is located outside the Town boundaries. This includes the special waste management plant, oil industry development, and recreation developments. Through collaborative efforts involving the Improvement Districts and the Provincial Government agreement has been reached with all parties regarding tax base sharing.

Issue: TAXATION/ASSESSMENT

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Decrease operating cost in town	- reduce service level if necessary - forgive municipal debt	High - Immediate	Town Municipal Affairs	Check how comparable expenditures are in this town with other similar towns; if high, reduce expenditures. Lobby Provincial Government
Recreation	- use natural environment	Medium	Town I.D. #17 Prov.	Community Futures grant might be available. Tourism Action Plan be developed. Economic development plan be prepared.
Industrial Expansion related to special waste treatment plant within town	- build upon existing and increase spin-off (related business)	High - Immediate	Chamber of Commerce Town I.D. #17	Economic development plan co-ordinates sections. Begin discussions with Industry interested parties.
Boundary Expansion	- to accommodate new industry/business and residential development	Medium - get prepared now.	LAB Town I.D. #17	Prepare to make annexation application. Provincial Government Yellowhead R.P.C.
Joint Agreement	- on-going - not sure if existing agreements are mutual	Medium	Town I.D. #17 (as needed 16, 15)	Establish a joint committee Town/I.D. #17 (row) to work towards Joint Agreement.

Issue: TAXATION/ASSESSMENT (continued)

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE ADDRESSED (what/why)	STRATEGIC ACTION (what)	PRIORITY (when)	RESOURCE GROUPS INVOLVED (with whom)	ACTION STEPS (how)
Industrial Transfer Tax	- increase by I.D.'s	High	Industry Town I.D.'s Provincial Government	Rationalize program being studied by Province. Circulate study to municipalities for comments.
Share the assessment wealth	- re-distribute the assessment (pre/post election) but apprehensive	Medium	Province Town I.D.'s	Study, options to municipal structures. (re-organizing urbans and rurals).

4. COLLOQUIUM REVIEW

On Wednesday and Thursday, the 26th and 27th of October, 1988 over forty-five participants from the community, industry, and government attended the Swan Hills Colloquium.

There were six purposes of the Colloquium. Each is elaborated upon in a retrospective manner.

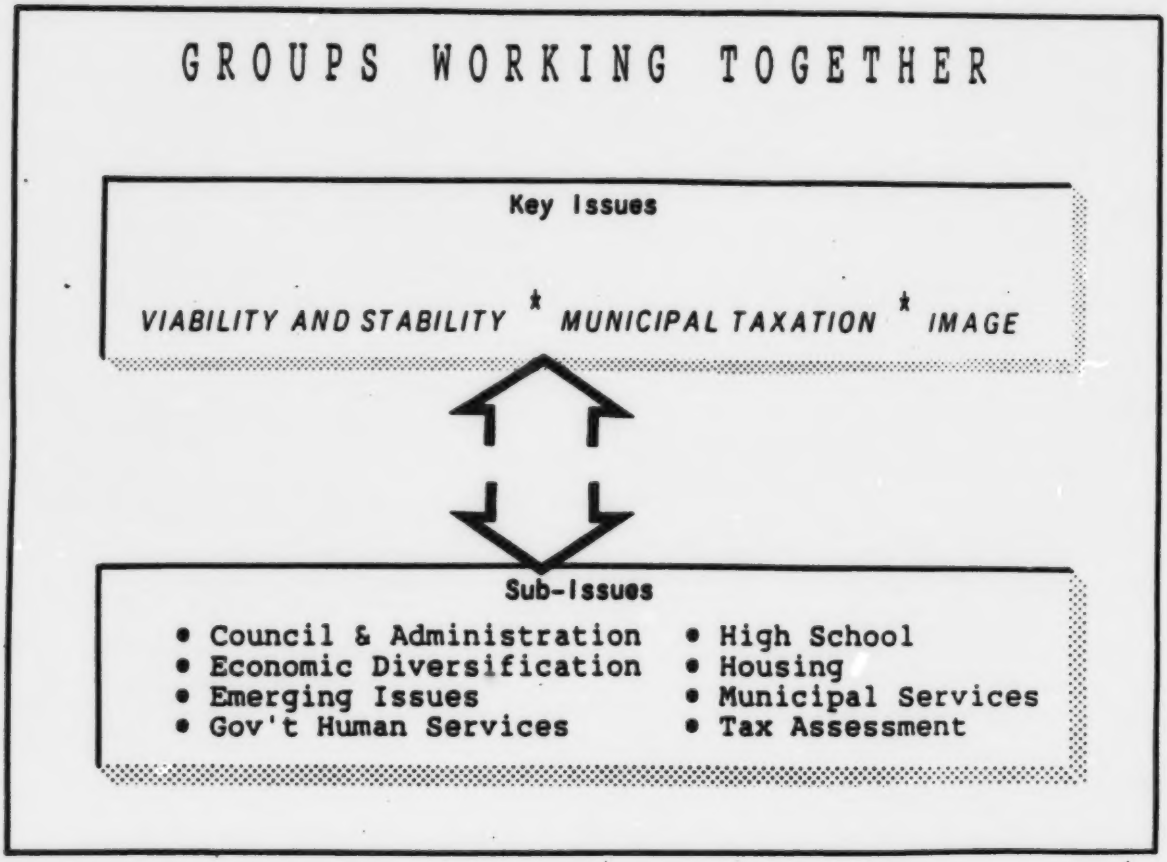
Get to know other participants.
This started with a Tuesday evening social. It was furthered during the Wednesday morning activities of getting acquainted, outlining individual expectations and concerns, the introduction of the Colloquium leaders, and being made aware of both effective listening and paraphrasing checks. This culminated with a supper and social on Wednesday evening.

Seek clarification of issues in the Discussion Paper.
Most of the issues were clarified as mentioned in the Discussion Paper and illustrated in Figure 1. The participants indicated the Discussion Paper clearly and succinctly presented the issues and their relationships, while accurately reflecting the participants' perspectives. This was further confirmed during the Wednesday morning Discussion Paper review and question time.

Develop an understanding of how others view these issues.
Wednesday afternoon started off by presenting a model to deal with current realities, how there is likely to be tension because they differ from our future visions, and that is why there is a need to come together and seek alternatives and share our solutions. The afternoon was spent determining the current reality of Swan Hills and area from the perspectives of the participants.

FIGURE 1

Linkages Among Key Issues and Sub-Issues
From the Participant Interviews



From the 44 interviews, three issues emerged as being dominant or key. Also another eight sub-issues were mentioned by many, in relation to the key ones. Many of these issues need to be addressed to enable further development of the Swan Hills area, over both the short and long term.

SOURCE: L. Benson and F. Dykeman. Swan Hills Colloquium Discussion Paper. Edmonton, Alberta Municipal Affairs October 1988. p.6.

With the participants in small groups, each discussed two of the three key issues. These issues were Viability/Stability, Municipal Taxation and Image. The groups were invited to discuss the issues, by:

- defining the issue and determining its cause;
- determining where there was agreement and/or disagreement with the discussion paper; and
- identifying other components of the issue not presented in the discussion paper.

Each group then presented their information.

Work with other participants to develop action plans.

Thursday morning started with the review of the model of current realities, future visions, and solutions. Yesterday, the participants had completed the current realities phase and now started on the future visions phase.

Participants selected one of the eight sub-issues and formed a group. The sub-issues were economic diversification, high school, small business, government human services, council and administration, housing, municipal services, and tax assessment.

Each group developed a broad vision of how they viewed the community and area of Swan Hills ten years from now. All the groups presented these back to the larger group. They continued on to develop a vision for their specific sub-issue and presented it back to the large groups. The balance of the morning was spent in small groups completing the Action Plan for their sub-issue.

Each of these sub-issue Action Plans were presented back to the larger group. This time participants asked questions of the presenting group to seek clarification.

Established networks for follow-up with other participants.

Thursday morning ended with each participant developing their own personal action plan, outlining what they were going to do to help the community and area of Swan Hills. The Colloquium ended with each participant sharing their own follow-up action(s). It was estimated that upwards of 100 actions were mentioned by the participants.

. The Colloquium agenda is included in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER, 1988

9:00 a.m.	Registration
9:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	* Welcome by Mayor Hanson by Municipal Affairs * Getting Acquainted * Expectations and Concerns A little bit about me Norms * Purpose/Theme/Agenda * Effective Listening Paraphrasing Check * Discussion Paper Review and Question Time
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	LUNCH
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	* Current Reality, Future Visions and Solutions * Major Issues Discussion and Sharing (Viability/Stability; Taxation, Image)
4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	FREE TIME
7:00 p.m.	Social
7:30 p.m.	SUPPER * Ministers Address Social

THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER, 1988

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	* Warmer-Upper * Future Visions * Swan Hills ten years from now. * Vision of issue resolved ten years from now. * Sub-Issues Discussion and Sharing (Economic Diversification, High School, Small Business, Government Human Services, Municipal Services, Council and Administration, Housing and Tax Assessment). * Solutions - Sub-Issues Action Plans - Personal Action Plans * Evaluations * Closure
12:00 p.m.	LUNCH Departure

YOUR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

We would be pleased to recieve your comments or suggestions on this ACTION PLAN report.

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